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ABSTRACT

Presented is an instructor's manual for conducting a learning session about public participation in water quality planning. Participants in the session learn about the purpose, organization, and activities of citizen advisory groups. The manual, a component of the Working for Clean Water Project, is designed for use in conjunction with a slide-tape program. (WB)

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Working for Clean Water

An Information Program for Advisory Committees

Role of Advisory Groups

Instructor Guide

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Role of Advisory Groups

Public participation has played varying roles and has had varying levels of influence in decision making in our country. Recently public participation has been emphasized through the use of citizen advisory groups. These advisory groups can help reconcile the many conflicting interests in our water quality management controversies. The success of advisory groups have been variable — depending on the knowledge, makeup, and organization of the group itself.

Advisory groups are required by law for 201 facilities planning and for 208 state and areawide quality management planning. As a result of this presentation the participant should:

- have a better sense of why advisory groups exist
- have a more informed judgment about advisory group membership, size, and composition
- have a more knowledgeable view of its activities
- be aware of significant organizational concerns
- be able to judge the effectiveness of their group.

Required Materials

☐ Set of slides plus cassette tape for the audiovisual presentation, "Role of Advisory Groups "

☐ Slide projector, screen, and related equipment

☐ Set of flip charts plus easel or set of transparencies and overhead projector for guided discussion

☐ Copy of handbook, "Role of Advisory Groups," for each participant

☐ Good, clear map of the local area.

Important Notes

1. Advance preparation is recommended so that instructor is knowledgeable about issues in the local area, region, and state in the particular EPA region.

2. If there is a particularly outstanding advisory group in the region or the state, find out about it with respect to organization, membership, activities, budget, and results. Get available materials and a profile of the advisory group for appropriate use and reference.

3. Have participants introduce themselves, noting any views or experiences they may have concerning advisory groups.

4. If, after five minutes into the guided discussion, the instructor has not been interrupted for comments or questions, say something outrageous in order to break the ice; this module is intended to profice a framework for discussion - Get Discussion.

5. Obtain copies of the final EPA regulations for public participation programs to give to each participant for reference.

6. The following is an optional activity the instructor may wish to develop given sufficient time:

• Have the participants list their communities' water quality and/or facilities problems.

• Use this information to choose the next several topics to be discussed in future presentations.

Organize this activity so that lots of group discussion occurs and the individual members get to know each other better. If the group is large, form smaller units. Each group should appoint a leader and someone to record its activities.

After the new topics are chosen, hand out the list of handbook titles, and briefly state what subjects are discussed in each. Try to match the information desired with the handbooks available.

Suggested Activities

Introductory Comments	5 minutes
A/V Presentation	15 minutes
Guided Discussion	25-45 minutes
Closing Remarks	5 minutes
TOTAL TIME	50-70 minutes

Introductory Comments (5 minutes)

Note: Contents of all charts are in the Appendix.

1. Briefly review the objectives of this presentation.

See chart 1.

2. Discuss how this presentation will benefit the advisory group.

3. Cite an example from the local area where an advisory group:

- helped something happen
- was a factor in a project being delayed or stopped.

The example could be any project, not just a water quality project, as long as it illustrates the role and effectiveness of an advisory group.

4. Emphasize the Key Questions but note that this list is not all-inclusive. Encourage other questions by being interested, responsive, and supportive.

Use chart 2.

Have some idea and information about issues in the local area and how they might relate to key questions. Ask participants about issues with which they may be familiar.

A/V Presentation (15 minutes)

1. Show the slide/tape program on the role of advisory groups.

A/V script is in the Appendix in case of equipment failure.

2. Ask the participants to jot down any questions they have during the slide/tape program.

Guided Discussion (25-45 minutes)

Use chart 3.

1. Why have an advisory group?

Ask participants about their previous experiences with planning projects and whether or not an advisory group would have been helpful.

Be familiar with experiences in the particular EPA region. Relate both good experiences and bad experiences to this key question.

Gettysburg Case Study:

You may wish to relate to the Gettysburg case study in which an advisory group was formed in accordance with the new regulations. This advisory group will be dealing with a controversial project where community input is very important in the comprehensive planning process.

Use chart 4.

2. Who should be members?

The following points should be discussed:

Composition - Emphasize the importance of representativeness.

Size - There is no magic number with respect to size.

Relationships among EPA, the assisted agency, and the advisory group.

Important point to stress!

Emphasize that the most important criteria for group membership is interest and willingness to give time for this activity.

Gettysburg Case Study:

The Gettysburg Advisory Group has 16 members representing private citizens, public interest groups, public officials, and organizations with economic interests.

Use chart 5.

3. What should an advisory group do?

Stress that it is the designated officials who make the final decisions.

Point out that the role of the advisory group is to advise and that advising is a powerful responsibility. Select a few questions from those provided in the handbook to give an idea of the kinds of important issues the group will have to face.

Discuss the role of the advisory group in public participation and in promoting public interest. Include their role in the selection of project consultants and the monitoring of the consultants' work as it progresses. Keep in mind that often a consultant is already on board before the advisory group is formed.

Very important part of the project.

Discuss the importance of the relationship between the advisory group and the assisted agency, as well as the selection of the right person for the liaison relationship.

Gettysburg Case Study:

Reference the Gettysburg Case Study to emphasize that understanding the advisory groups' role is at many times very difficult, but reviewing existing information and asking questions can make their role clearer.

Discuss specific comments and activities of the advisory group members.

Be sure to allow time for this.

4. How should an advisory group be organized?

Use chart 6.

Officers - Elect only those absolutely necessary.

By-laws - Keep simple.

Meetings - Schedule them in advance; have a prepared agenda; be open to the public.

Stress importance of attendance and participation of members.

Budget - Show a sample budget; size will depend on scope of activities.

Use sample budget shown on chart 7.

Committees - Appoint only those necessary.

Results - Emphasize consensus when taking action; help create an atmosphere that gets things done.

Ask group to note items they have already considered and which ones need attention.

Gettysburg Case Study:

Discuss the Gettysburg advisory group and the way in which they recognized the importance of organization, but moved on to substantive issues in order that they could better acquaint themselves with the situation and each other.

Use chart 8.

5. What makes an advisory group worthwhile?

Utility of its recommendations
Validity of its agenda
Its reputation

Gettysburg Case Study:

The Gettysburg advisory group expects their concerns to be answered by the consultant planners preparing the EIS. they have shown a strong allegiance to the local community and intend to make the public more aware of the problems to be resolved.

6. What problems and pitfalls can advisory groups expect, and how can they be avoided?

7. Remember to address any additional questions or concerns that the participants have brought up.

Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

Use chart 9.

1. Summarize the key points of the discussion. Note the conclusions given in the handbook.

Selected Resources

Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (PL 92-500), as amended by the Clean Water Act of 1977 (PL 92-217).

The instructor should be at least generally familiar with this legislation.

Pogell, Suzanne, M. "Government-Initiated Public Participation in Environmental Decisions," Environmental Comment. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute, April 1979. pp. 4-6.

Discusses public participation with respect to key elements of an open and effective communication system: awareness, access, information, opportunity, and planning. Environmental Comment is a monthly publication of the Urban Land Institute, 1200 18th St., NW, Washington, DC 20036. The cost is $2.25 per copy plus postage and handling. There are quantity discounts.

"Public Participation Programs Under the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Clean Water Act: Final Regulations, Title 40, Chapter 1, Part 25." Federal Register, Vol. 44, No. 34, Part V, Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, pp. 10286-10297. February 16, 1979.

This represents the complete set of rules and regulations for public participation including the Clean Water Act of 1977. It deals with public hearing and advisory groups in detail including both the responsibilities of the groups and the EPA. The instructor should be thoroughly familiar with these implementing regulations.

Rastatter, Clem L., ed. Municipal Wastewater Management: Citizen's Guide to Facility Planning. FRD-6. Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water Program Operations, January 1979. 263 pp.

This handbook is designed to acquaint citizen leaders with important decisions that need to be made in managing wastewater. The book: identifies key decisions throughout the planning process that are critical to the facility plan and the community; identifies environmental, economic, and social considerations affecting these decisions; facilitates citizen input and helps citizens understand the legal tools to facilitate their involvement. It is a good reference book. It is available from the General Services Administration (8FFS), Centralized Mailing Lists Services, Building 41, Denver Federal Center, Denver, CO 80225. Indicate the FRD number and title of publication.

Setting the Course for Clean Water. Washington, DC: National Wildlife Federation, March 1978.

An easy-to-read citizen's guide to the 208 water quality management program. Single copies of this handbook are available free from the National Wildlife Federation's Education Division, 1412 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Additional copies are available at a cost of $2.00 each.

"State and Local Assistance, Grants for Construction of Treatment Works, Title 40, Chapter 1, Part 35." Federal Register, Vol. 44, No. 34, Part VI, Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, pp. 10300-10304. February 16, 1979.

This document presents the rules and regulations for public involvement in the Wastewater Treatment Construction Grants Program.

Appendix

A. Contents of charts for use by instructor in the guided discussion. Pages may be used to make transparencies or the contents may be copied onto flip charts.

1. Presentation Objectives
2. Key Questions
3. Why Have An Advisory Group?
4. Who Should Be Members?
5. What Should An Advisory Group Do?
6. How Should An Advisory Group Organize Itself?
7. Sample Project Budget
8. What Makes It Worthwhile?
9. Key Points

It is expected that YOU, indeed, will:

- become a participant in your community's decision-making process to attain clean water
- help the advisory group become more knowledgeable concerning 201/208 activities
- recognize that giving advice can be a very powerful force when it reflects knowledge, understanding, deliberation, and consensus.

Key Questions

Why have an advisory group?

Who should be members?

What should it do?

How should it be organized?

What makes it worthwhile?

Why have an advisory group?

- It's a good idea
- It's the law

Who should be members?

- Composition
- Size
- Relationships

What should an advisory group do?

How should an advisory group organize itself?

- Officers
- By-laws
- Meetings
- Budget
- Committees
- Results

Sample Project Budget for Public Participation and Advisory Group

Advisory Group			$ 1,500
Travel	$500		
Field Trip	500		
Supplies	500		
Public Participation Coordinator			10,000
Work plan, meetings, informational materials, notices, responsibilities to advisory committee			
Engineering Staff			5,000
Public Hearing Stenographer			500
Postage, Supplies, Misc.			1,500
		TOTAL	$18,500

What makes an advisory group worthwhile?

- Utility of its recommendations
- Validity of its agenda
- Its reputation

1. The advisory group is *part* of the decision-making process and not an end in itself.

2. Its word is not final or absolute.

3. Its activities will involve significant time and effort of its members.

4. It will be listened to *if* it
   - does its work with care
   - deals with important issues
   - achieves consensus
   - helps provide focus and a sense of direction.

The Role of the Advisory Group

Slide Description	Narrative
1. Title: The Role of the Advisory Group	Music
2. Picture: Battlefield scene with cannon and cannonballs	The reason I think that we are brought together is a longstanding problem on sewerage particularly, and water treatment and
3. Picture: Battlefield scene with historic markers. Graphic in lower foreground: "Gettysburg, Pennsylvania"	facilities, and it's been an inability, really, in the past for us to cope with that as a local municipality, etc. So now it's a new start.
4. Picture: Gavel	Okay, the Public Participation Advisory Group is now in session.
5. Picture: Advisory Group at table	May we have a motion that we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting? So move. Second.
6. Picture: Advisory Group with focus on Chairman	It has been moved and seconded that we dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting. All those in favor? Aye. Opposed ... Motion carried.
7. Picture: Clear Stream	When Congress passed the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and the Clean Water Act Ammendments, it said that there must be public participation in all activities funded by the Acts.
8. Picture: Advisory Group discussion	The objective was to assure open processes in the implementation of the Acts and to promote public awareness as important decisions are being made.
9. Picture: Member speaking	To this end advisory groups such as yours will be established in most communities for which a clean water project is funded under the Acts.
10. Picture: Lake Heritage	As a member of an Advisory Group, you are being asked to represent everyone's interest in a life force. Clean water is essential to all and to the nation's economic and social well-being.

11. Picture:	Member speaking and gesticulating	There are many legitimate viewpoints to be heard and considered in planning for and achievement of clean water and, errors in judgment can have serious and expensive consequences.
12. Picture:	3 members conversing	Your Advisory Group can provide for open communication to explore ideas and issues and can help reduce the risk of failure in environmental planning.
13. Graphic:	"Size and Composition"	I think it is a good sized.
14. Picture:	Member reading	I think it is broad enough to represent various constituencies and to get feedback from them, and yet not too large that it is unworkable.
15. Picture:	EPA representative, speaking	You have got to remember that in Gettysburg we have a unique situation,
16. Picture:	People in battlefield	because you've got the Park Service, federal interest, municipal authority, tourist trade, and
17. Picture:	Downtown Gettysburg	all the other usual representations, I guess, that you have in any type of community ... I think any less than we have here tonight wouldn't give you an opportunity to have a balanced view, because we have five municipalities involved. Borough of Gettysburg, and the four surrounding townships ...
18. Picture:	EPA representative at table, not speaking	anything more than that I think is something that is unmanageable.
19. Graphic:	· Private Citizens · Public Interest Group · Public Officials · Those with economic interests	The Advisory Group should represent a balance of the interests in the community insofar as is practical. This should include private citizens, public interest groups, public officials and any organization with economic interest in the plan or project.
20. Picture:	Large group meeting	Obviously it may not always be possible for everyone to be represented without the group becoming so large as to be unmanageable. A group of fifty or more may be forced to debate so many personal interests that it operates under severe handicaps.

21. Picture:	Downtown Gettysburg; people and historic directory	On the other hand, the group cannot fulfill its mission if it is so small as to be unrepresentative.
22. Picture:	Downtown Gettysburg; with road signs in foreground and water tower in background.	The determination of the size of the Advisory Group must be made in the light of the particular community and the difficulty of the task.
23. Picture:	Advisory Group Chairman	Moreover, one of the most important considerations in determining the best size of the group is the number of people who are interested in serving. This
24. Picture:	Advisory Group member talking, gesticulating	interest and a willingness to give a reasonable amount of time to the work of the Advisory Group is an essential consideration for the selection of members.
25. Picture:	Advisory Group	Highly structured systems of selection mean little if the individual selected has too little time or interest in the work of the Advisory Group.
26. Graphic:	Citizen Advisory Group with inputs; grantee and agencies.	It is the responsibility of the EPA Grantee, (that is, the municipal authority or similar assisted agency), to establish an Advisory Group that is representative for the activity in question. Projects such as a new sewage treatment plant, for example, may need different representation than a project for storm water control.
27. Picture:	Different street scene in Gettysburg; person and parked cars.	The agency must identify the important interest groups which should be involved
28. Picture:	Park Service office	and must make active efforts to solicit interest and
29. Picture:	Chamber of Commerce office	participation. One of the first orders of business in the initial meeting of the
30. Picture:	Real estate office	group is to obtain suggestions from those attending as to the individuals or organizations which are not represented adequately.
31. Graphic:	"Role of the Advisory Group"	As we tried to do tonight,

32. Picture:	Group member	to make our constituencies aware of what is being contemplated and then perhaps even more
33. Picture:	Group member explaining maps to group	importantly to bring back to those who are contemplating it what our constituents think about it.
34. Picture:	Group member	Well, I am not smart enough, but I have lived a long time. And I think that, don't misunderstand me,
35. Picture:	Group member	but I think the role of the Advisory Group is paper, to help form good opinion, of this whole movement to have an advisory group.
36. Picture:	Group member	I am not as old as he. So I have a more idealistic idea of what the advisory group is here for, and that people can present their opinions.
37. Picture:	Group member	What we are asking them to do is as individuals go back to the constituencies they represent, the landlords, tenants, taxpayers association, League of Women Voters, National Park Service, and
38. Picture:	Gettysburg street scene	at least explain to their constituencies what we are doing here and what types of implications it might have for them and
39. Picture:	Creek	then get back to us with how they feel as a constituency group, or if it happens to be a township supervisor, how the township as a whole feels about that.
40. Graphic:	"Advise"	It is important that each Advisory Group member understands clearly what it is that the group is to do. We must recognize that the ultimate decision making responsibility rests with the elected officials as established by law.
41. Picture:	Group members reading map	Nonetheless, the Advisory Group plays a most important role in the decision making process by advising the elected officials.
42. Picture:	Map in hands of member	The many current or future issues which will affect the quality of water in the community represent important judgments which must be made.

43. Picture:	Member reviewing document	The Advisory Group must make recommendations about these judgments to assure that all appropriate considerations are taken into account.
44. Graphic:	Assisted Agency Responsibilities: · Involve Group · Provide Information · Seek Recommendations · Respond to Recommendations	Under Environmental Protection Agency regulations the assisted agency is responsible for the proper involvement of the Advisory Group in the decision making process. The assisted agency must support this involvement by providing any needed information. And, the agency must request the Advisory Group's recommendations on important decisions before they are made and be certain that this advice is considered by the elected officials. Finally, the agency must make written responses to any formal recommendations which the Advisory Group makes.
45. Graphic:	"Organization of Advisory Group"	
46. Picture:	Group member	Frankly I think the first couple meetings there was a little bit of confusion; I am not sure anyone really at that point understood exactly what we were really doing.
47. Picture:	Group member	I don't think organization was really important. I think that is one reason that the chairman wasn't really much of a driving issue.
48. Picture:	Group member	It's more of a public forum type of situation and we didn't need the leadership other than as has been mentioned,
49. Picture:	Group member	to provide us with materials to study before we come so that we have some idea what we're talking about.
50. Picture:	Group member	I wasn't here at the first meeting, but from what I gather, that one and certainly the next one, we sort of sat around with everyone saying well really, what are we here for, what are we doing? As
51. Picture:	Advisory Group	Advisory Group members, you should determine the organization and structure of your group. Although an elaborate formal structure is unnecessary and should be avoided the early establishment of an appropriate organization will assure that the group uses valuable time efficiently.

52. Graphic:	"How Should ..." Choose Officers highlighted	To this end, a Chairman and Vice-Chairman should be elected. Elect a temporary chairman for the first two or three meetings. You may elect permanent officers later when the members of the Advisory Group become more fully acquainted with each other. Depending on the given situation, the group may also wish to elect a secretary or treasurer.
53. Graphic:	(same), Establish By-Laws highlighted	Similarly, the group may wish to write its own by-laws and rules of order, although care should be taken not to spend a lot of time and effort on procedural matters.
54. Graphic:	(same), Schedule Meetings highlighted	Within the first several meetings the group should establish regular meeting times that are convenient for members. There should be a clear agenda set for each meeting. Members should attend regularly. You may want to establish a maximum number of consecutive absences which will be deemed acceptable.
55. Picture:	Visitor speaking	Open meetings to the public and provide an opportunity for visitors to comment at each meeting. You should determine the
56. Graphic:	(same) Set Budget highlighted	budget for the Advisory Group activities with the help of the assisted agency. Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses and technical assistance costs can be supported with the approval of the Environmental Protection Agency.
57. Graphic:	"Effectiveness of the Advisory Group"	I don't think we really have much in the way of power.
58. Picture:	Group member	I feel very strongly they will take the advice of the committee.
59. Picture:	Group member	I think that the public usually jumps on things and says that this is just a rigamarole which persons go through and that you go through them just because they are there,

60. Picture:	Group member	as steps that the government must go through even though it has already made the decisions before you start. But I don't think that's true.
61. Picture:	Group member examining map	You can determine the effectiveness of the Advisory Group by what happens to its recommendations. Therefore, one of the most important activities of the Advisory Group should be to follow through and monitor its recommendations.
62. Picture:	Group member discussing map	If the recommendations raise questions which require further consideration and response, or if the recommendations are being followed, there is evidence of effectiveness.
63. Picture:	Group member reading	On the other hand if the recommendations of the Advisory Group seem to be ignored or not followed in a sufficient way, the group should try to figure out why.
64. Picture:	Group members	The Advisory Group should examine whether the issues with which it is dealing are important to the community and the decision makers. Similarly, in this case, the Advisory Group should attempt to assess its own credibility.
65. Picture:	Advisory Group	Here are three suggestions to make sure the Advisory Group is worth the effort:
66. Words:	Deal only ...	Deal only with matters that are important to the community and public officials.
67. Words:	Be certain ...	Be certain that each recommendation has been carefully deliberated and is based on as factual an examination of the problem as possible.
68. Words:	Be jealous ...	Be jealous of the reputation of the Advisory Group.
60. Credits		Voices/sounds of Advisory group meeting. Music.